Gen Mordecai's Coy
from his friend
Thomas Atkinson

EXTRACT FROM THE ADDRESS

OF

RT. REV. THOMAS ATKINSON,

BISHOP OF NORTH CAROLINA,

Before the Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, held at Raleigh, September 13th, 1865.

"There is a question of the greatest interest and importance, which this Diocese, in common with its associates in the late Confederate States, is compelled by recent political events to consider. The authority of the civil government of the United States having been re-established, what is to be our relation to the Church of the United States? Ought we to maintain an organization distinct and independent of it, or to seek re-union with it? This is a question which it is certain, requires of us, all of calm and dispassionate wisdom that we can command, and what is even more important, a supreme reference to the honor of our Lord and the welfare of His Church, making us willing to sacrifice to these objects, whatever tends merely to gratify our own feelings, or to gain the favor of our fellow men. To me it is plain that this is a critical moment in the history of the Church, both at the North and the South—that on the decision it shall now reach, and the action it shall now pursue, it will depend very much, whether in the future it shall sink to the level of a mere sect, or rather a bundle of hostile sects, or shall maintain its claim to be a pure and vigorous branch of the Church, Catholic, rising continually into wider use

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fulness, and higher influence, until at length it shall become the Church, not merely in the United States, but of the American people.

The organization of a Church in the Confederate States, distinct from that in the United States, was I conceive, justifiable, and, indeed, would have been, if events had occurred according to our expectation, indispensable to enable us to do our full duty to the people entrusted to our care. Otherwise we could make no provision for the election, consecration, and trial of Bishops, for sustaining and regulating our missionary efforts, and for the mutual counsel and cooperation which we needed. Maimed and impotent as the Church at the South had been rendered by our political separation from the North, had she shown that she had no "*vis medicatrix*" in herself, men would have been ready to forsake her, as a dead body, and join some religious society, that, whatever might be its defects, at least had life in it.

The Confederate States would either maintain their independence, or they would not. If they maintained it, as we believed they would, then the preface to the American Prayer Book, itself taught us that "Eclesiastical Independence was necessarily included in Civil," a proposition which goes far beyond what we need to maintain for our justification. If, on the contrary, the Confederate Government should fail, the union of the Southern Dioceses under it, would be at least an aid and benefit to them, while it lasted. I think no man can study Church History intelligently and candidly, and then deny that our action was substantially the same which the primitive Bishops and Councils would have adopted. To condemn it serves to show either the violence of political feeling, or a narrow adherence to forms, rather than a right perception of the spirit of the institutions of the Church.

Having then as we trust, not seriously erred in the past, how shall we avoid mistake and wrong in the future? Shall we continue a separate church organization at the South, or

shall we seek our former place in the church of the United States? To decide this it is well to inquire what were our reasons for forming that organization. They grew out of the political separation of the Southern States from the Northern. There was no controversy or cause of alienation in the Church whatsoever. As the Bishops of the Southern Dioceses, at the meeting of the only General Council which has been held, said in their Pastoral Letter, "Forced by the Providence of God to separate ourselves from the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States—a church with whose doctrine, discipline and worship we are in entire harmony, and with whose action up to the time of that separation, we were abundantly satisfied," the feeling of the Southern Dioceses, towards the body of which they had formed a part was entirely cordial and kindly. During the war, language was undoubtedly used by ministers and members of the Church at the North, which appeared to us, justly liable to exception, but no act has been done by the Church as a body of which we can complain. There being many reasons for union, and the cause which produced our separation having ceased, it would appear now that re-union is the wise and proper course. But it appears to me to be even more, to be the course required of us by our principles as Churchmen. Unity of government is one of the most essential parts of that unity of His Church, which our Saviour stamped on it, as one of its marks and characters, but which men have so signally defaced. This unity the Primitive Church enjoyed by means of its General Councils. It is now lost and with it much of the inward life and progressive power of the Church are lost.

The unity of the Church in each Nation, in government as in faith, has been retained as a principle, and with some slight and easily explained exceptions, as a fact, wherever the Church derived from the Apostles has been planted.—The Church of England for example, is one, the Gallican Church is one, the Church of Russia is one. The non ju-

rors, of England, with so much that was admirable in their leaders and in their cause, failed very much on this account, that if successful, if they had maintained their organization, they would have accomplished a schism in the National Church. This principle of the unity of the church in each country was carefully kept in view by the fathers of the American Church. They called that branch of the Church "The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States." They provided for Dioceses to be formed in each one of the United States, and in any Territory thereof. On the same principle the Church in the Confederate States acted, and a corresponding provision did it introduce into its constitution. Now, shall we of our own accord, renounce this approved and time honored principle? I speak not of what we may be compelled to do in these sad times. It may become necessary to throw overboard precious treasures, in order to save those which are still more precious. But shall we *choose* to abandon this ancient and salutary principle, and do what we can to put ourselves on the footing of a new sect? It is easy to see what the practical consequences of such a course would be. If the Southern Dioceses shall not be in communion with the Church in the United States, congregations will be formed in those Dioceses, preferring, sometimes from their view of church principles, sometimes on political grounds, sometimes from early association, to retain and hold fast by that communion.

Rival congregations will be established in the same town, altar will be set up against altar, and preacher inveigh against preacher, until instead of the Church being as heretofore the refuge of those who love peace and prefer religious instruction and exhortation to political harangues, it will itself become a den of controversy, and a fomenter of political passion. Similar results may be expected in some degree at the North, especially in the border States and the great cities, for in these congregations with Southern sympathies might well be organized. Let us then endeavor to

forecast the future as well as we can, for we are not deciding any ephemeral question. The conclusion to which we shall now come is one in which our children and our children's children have a deep interest as well as ourselves. The authority of the government of the United States is re-established over the South, and there is an universal disclaimer of any intention or desire to attempt to unsettle it. But it is very far from being certain what the nature of the Union is to be which has been cemented again with so much blood. Is it to be one of constraint, or one of affection? Is the South to be added to the melancholy list of oppressed nationalities—to become an American Poland or Hungary, to live by the side of the North in a state of chronic turbulence, suspicious and suspected, hating and hated? A doom so mournful and so humiliating is certainly not to be desired. Can it be averted? To me it seems very much to depend on the Ministers of Religion. They have a great deal to do in moulding the sentiments of a people. They sit by their firesides—they are admitted into their most confidential communications. A feeling which they sanction is, on that account, much more strongly believed to be right and proper to be cherished, while one which they reprobate is, even if still indulged in, thought to be of a questionable nature. The effect of this has been very plainly exhibited in the recent history of our country.

No one, I suppose, doubts that the disruption of the bonds which held together some of our largest religious bodies, and the erection at the North and South of rival and hostile communions, perpetually inveighing against each other, bandying to and fro the most offensive charges, and stimulating the passions of the people of both sections, that all this led, by necessary consequence, immediately and powerfully to the political severance, which culminated in the recent terrible war. If we suppose then that there is to be henceforth no religious unison between the North and the South, except so far as the Roman Catholic Church furnishes it,

what will be the result? One obvious and certain consequence will be the immense increase of the Roman Catholic Church. But as that is not likely to absorb very soon, the whole, or the greater part of the people, there will be this further consequence, a mutual and constantly increasing estrangement between the people themselves. The soreness and irritation which necessarily exist, will be perpetuated and rendered more intense, and wounds instead of healing under the soothing effects of time, will be kept open and become ulcers, only to be extirpated by fire and sword. It is then of cardinal importance to the peace and welfare of the country, that there should be a re-union of the different religious denominations which now have distinct organizations at the North and the South. But I believe it to be perfectly evident, that if this is to take place, it must begin with the Episcopal Church. If that cannot, or will not re-unite none can or will. We separated from the force of outward circumstances, without discord, without crimination or recrimination, on the contrary, with the language of love on our lips, and I trust and believe, with the feeling of love in our hearts.

And again, we feel strongly the force of certain cohesive principles in the Church, which other Protestant bodies, either altogether disregard or attach very little value to.—We believe that schism is a sin, as well as a source of innumerable and incalculable evils. And surely wilful separation from a church with which we have hitherto been in union, is schism, or schism is a very mysterious and impalpable thing, a sentimental grief, not a plain matter of fact, taking place before the eyes of men. An enforced separation is not schism. The Church of Scotland is not schismatical as to the Church of England, because the State keeps them apart. The Church in the Confederate States was not schismatical as to the Church in the United States, because war and diversities of political government kept them apart.

But when there is no war and no diversity of political government, then to remain apart because we cannot bear

each other's presence, that is schism and great uncharitableness, and so the common sense of all men who believe that there is such a sin, will ultimately decide. But it has been maintained that a common government is not essential to unity in the church, this consisting in unity of order, ritual, faith and spirit. Certainly a common government is not indispensable where it cannot be had, for no man is required to do that which is impossible. And it is certain also that Church unity consists of many particulars, but surely unity of government is one of these, for two ecclesiastical bodies with two distinct and independent governments can, only by great violence done to language, be called one body, and this also ought to be carefully considered, that a common government is the necessary condition of unity in any other relation of the Church. For if one ecclesiastical body separate into two, what shall prevent the one part or the other from making innovations in what had been their common ritual. No ritual is absolutely perfect, and consequently there is always a desire to amend in some way or other; and it is certainly very improbable that the same amendments shall recommend themselves to both parties. And even unity of faith can hardly be preserved where there is diversity of government. For in some form or other it will be apt to appear that there may be an improvement either in the faith itself or in the expression of it, and especially will changes of this sort be likely to be accomplished, where one of these bodies is small and but few persons have to be consulted. It is certain that the magnitude of an ecclesiastical body tends to the stability of its faith. All this seems to me to be illustrated and enforced by what occured at the organization of the Church in the United States. We all know with what wisdom, patience and prudence this was effected, and how sincerely the Fathers of the American Church desired and even promised, not to depart in their new organization from the faith of the Church of England. Yet the Athanaisan creed has been expunged, and the ar-

ticle of the descent into hell in the Apostles' creed, is allowed either to be omitted or to have as its equivalent the phrase, "He went into the place of departed spirits," which is not considered by many distinguished Divines as being by any means its equivalent. In our case changes might be made with much less difficulty, for we have made no promises, and are likely to be a smaller body. There are persons of influence at the North, and I believe also at the South, who have desired the exclusion of the "*Filioque*" from the Nicene Creed. Suppose this were adopted by the one party, it would be more likely on that very account to be rejected by the other. We shall then have the same wall of separation between us, which chiefly divides the Roman Catholic Church from the Greek. And the party which adopted the Greek type of the creed would be quite apt to exhibit the feeling of the Greeks, who consider all heterodox who differ from them on this point. In short, it seems to me that two ecclesiastical bodies who have distinct and independent governments, will be very sure to vary in many important particulars, furnishing a battle ground for the bitterest controversy.

I am aware that it may be replied that this line of argument would tend to prove that there is schism in our separation from the Roman Catholic Church, and I admit it to be fair consequence, but we maintain that the schism is on their side. If they admitted of our communion with them, professing only the ancient creeds and submitting to the authority of general councils lawfully constituted and founding all their decisions on the Scriptures, he who would refuse to unite with them, would show much more regard for his own tastes and feelings than to the precepts of Christ. But when they demand of us as the terms of communion—the acknowledgement of the divine authority of the modern and unscriptural creed of Pope Pius IVth, and the grievous addition made to it by the present reigning Pope, we maintain that we cannot accede to this condition without violating

our duty to God, and that the sin of the schism therefore lies at their door. And so as to our present duty, if the Church in the United States demanded of us unscriptural or otherwise inadmissible terms of communion, and we separate thereupon, *it* becomes schismatical. If it demand none such, and we wilfully refuse union, *we* are the schismatics.

Now these are principles which the Episcopal Church has not only always held explicitly or implicitly, but held aloft. She has inculcated them upon her children, and thundered them in the ears of her adversaries. If then the Church which only separated because of outward circumstances which have passed away, if that church, holding principles which are so strongly adverse to separation, if she cannot re-unite, how can other bodies which parted in mutual disgust and indignation, and which regard diversity of organization as a merit and a blessing rather than an evil, how can they be expected to come together again? And yet if the Episcopal Church should, they must, or they will lose their hold on the best part of their people, and probably at length become extinct. For religious minded and thoughtful men, who fear God and love their country, and seek after that charity and peace which are the especial fruits of the Spirit, will certainly seek a shelter and a home in that communion in which these graces are cultivated, rathen than in those bodies, which rent asunder by political strife, exhaust their energies in mutual warfare. I conceive therefore that the best hopes of the country, and especially of the South, are bound up in the question, what will the Episcopal Church now do? My earnest desire then, and constant prayer is, that the Church may be restored again in the unity of its government, and the unfeigned love of its members. And yet I can not conceal from myself, that even this blessing, much as it is to be desired, earnestly as it is to be sought after may be bought at too great a price. The price would be too great, if to obtain it, we were required to violate conscience, to deny what we believe to be true, or to express re-

pentance for what we do not see to be evil. The assurances, however, which I have received from a number of friends at the North, lead me to believe that the great body of the Church there desire nothing of the sort. And if there be, as perhaps there may be, some persons in that communion, who are contentious, and desire to perpetuate discord and degrade their former brethren, let us hope that their number will prove to be small as their principles are evil and pernicious. And let me add that what is right to be done on this weighty subject, it is right should be done quickly. The interests are too momentous to be left to the hazards and uncertainties of time. May God give us wisdom and understanding and faithful hearts to see our duty and to follow it. And at the same time it is our duty, as it is, I am sure, our wish, in all we do on this subject to consult, and as far as possible, co-operate with the other Dioceses of the Church in the Confederate States.

I think it right to add a few words on another topic connected with our political condition. It is, on our duty to the colored population, lately liberated by the action of the Government of the United States. Some of us have ever feared while the colored people were in the condition of slavery, that the power and control which the white race possessed over them, was not exercised in such a way as to make us acceptable to God, and faithful stewards in His sight.—There was much kind feeling towards our servants, which was fully reciprocated by them; there was a good deal of care shown in providing for their bodily wants, but very insufficient attention was paid to their moral and religious improvement. At the same time, I take pleasure in bearing this testimony, which is, I think, very honorable to the masters and mistresses under the old system, that they listened to sharp and pointed rebukes and remonstrances on this subject, not only with patience but with gratitude, that they desired to learn their duty, that they were year by year improving in the discharge of it, that the chief care and la-

bor of many men, and a still larger number of the women of the South were occupied in promoting the welfare of their servants, and, that under our system of slavery, the African race made a progress during the last hundred years, not only in numbers and physical comfort, but a progress from barbarism to civilization, from Heathenism to Christianity, to which the history of the world offers no parallel. But the system was no doubt defective, better adapted to the early stage of a people's progress from the savage state, than to that which they have now reached; and at any rate, God in his Providence has definitively set it aside. The future of that people is very obscure, and there is, in the judgment of many, great danger even of their extinction as a race.

What then must we do as Christian men and women? We must continue our care for them; we ought even to increase it. We have surely been in some degree delinquent in the past, let us resolve in God's strength, not to be so for the future. We shall have less of natural affection to animate us; let us try to have more of christian principle.—Slavery, strangely as such a sentiment may sound at the Tabernacle, or in Exeter Hall, has much in it to attach men to each other. There is protection on the one side and dependence on the other, and as the wisdom of Lord Bacon long ago taught us, "There is little friendship in the world, and least of all between equals. That that is, is between superior and inferior, whose fortunes may comprehend the one, the other." This relation, however, with whatever it had of good, and whatever of evil, being now at an end, but the subjects of it being still in the midst of us, necessarily poor, generally ignorant, and generally improvident, their wants and their dangers must be very great. That then which becomes us towards all men, especially becomes us towards them. First to be just, next to be kind. Let us remember then that by our existing political system, in which we have acquiesced, they have a right to wages for their labor. Let us pay them then, not grudgingly or of necessity, but as an honest debt. The amount must of course, depend on the value of their labor, the number of their families, whom we have to support, and partly too, on the resources of a much impoverished people; but as Christians we must see to it, that we give them "that which is just and equal, knowing that we also have a Master in Heaven."

But we ought to be more than just. That is but the heathen standard of right. As Christians, we must aim at something higher. We must remember the ignorance and inexperience of these, who are to so great an extent, grown children. We must allow for the immediate, intoxicating effect of so great and sudden a change in their condition.—We must keep in mind their general faithfulness in the hour of trial. We must allow for occasional instances of what seems to us folly, or perversity, or ingratitude. We must practice towards them the Apostical injunctions which are so strikingly united. "Be pitiful, be courteous." Their distresses in their new condition are likely to be many and great. Let us be ready to relieve them accordingly as God gives us the means. They are as a race, peculiarly sensible of courtesy, or the absence of it. They show it abundantly themselves, and they are very much wounded when it is denied to them. They feel contempt or rudeness, more than a serious injury. Let us inflict none of these on them. Let us make them feel, what is, I believe, most true, that their best friends are among ourselves, and that to us, they must look for counsel, and aid, and protection. But above all, let us remember that part of our duty, in which, I fear, we have been most deficient, providing for them sound, religious instruction. They are in great danger of falling into the hands of mischievous, and sometimes, no doubt, malevolent fanatics, which would be a great calamity to them, and also to us. Let us endeavor to avert it, by doing what is at any rate our duty, by giving them the true doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ in lieu of the vain janglings of false teachers. Let us raise up colored congregations in our towns, and let all our clergy feel that an important part of their charge is to teach and to befriend the colored people, and especially to train, as far as they are permitted to do so, the children of that race."

The following resolutions were passed by the Council:

"The committee to whom was referred that part of the Bishop's address which relates to the re-union of the diocese of North Carolina with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, having considered the subject laid before them, beg leave to report that being anxious to maintain the unity of the Church within the borders of the United States, and remembering with satisfaction the entire harmony which formerly existed among the dioceses, they have heard, with gratification, the sentiments expressed by the Bishop of this

diocese, in regard to re-union, and have received with equal pleasure the cordial invitation which has been extended by the presiding Bishop of the Church in the United States, to the Bishops and dioceses of the South, to return to their places in the General Convention; therefore,

Resolved, That the diocese of North Carolina is prepared to resume her position as a diocese in connection with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, whenever, in the judgment of the Bishop, after consultation with the Bishops of the Southern dioceses (which consultation he is hereby requested to hold) it shall be consistent with the good faith which she owes to the Dioceses with which she has been in union during the past four years.

Resolved, That with a view to such contingency, there be four Clerical and four Lay deputies elected to represent this Diocese in the ensuing general Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.

R. S. MASON, Chm'n.

The following delegates were elected to the General Convention to be held at Philadelphia in October, under the foregoing resolutions:

CLERGY.—Reverends R. S. Mason, F. M. Hubbard, J. B. Cheshire, W. Hodges.

LAY DELEGATES.—Hon. Wm. H. Battle, R. H. Smith, Robt. Strange, Kemp P. Battle.

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